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GO! Green Outreach

SHARING SUSTAINABILITY NEWS, EFFORTS AND IDEAS WITH THE PEOPLE OF CAMPUS

ISSUE 17 • SUMMER 2012

Changing How We Choose Hotels

Would you pay more to stay in a hotel that took steps to be “greener?” If you said “yes,” then a University of Arkansas researcher, Godwin-Charles Ogbeide, believes that you are not alone. His study, “Perceptions of Green Hotels in the 21st Century” has earned him the Resort and Commercial Recreation Association’s 2011 Excellence in Research Award.

Ogbeide, an assistant professor of hospitality and hotel management, found that most consumers are inclined to stay at hotels that take steps to be environmentally sustainable. He cited three categories that matter most to consumers: water, energy and waste reduction.

“The things that appealed to the consumers that we studied were anything to do with water conservation, energy conservation and waste reduction,” Ogbeide said. “The two the customers are most willing to do are water conservation and energy conservation. They are willing to turn off the light.”

The three factors that appeal most to consumers are also the biggest concerns for hotel operations. Air conditioning systems use large amounts of energy and water, and because many hotels do not know when the patrons will be checking in, they leave the units on all day. Some hotels, in an effort to curb their energy use, will leave the units off and have the consumers turn



them on when they arrive, or, if they know when their guests will arrive, turn on the unit shortly before that time.

Water conservation is another area where simple changes can make big differences. For patrons who stay more than one night, the simple act of re-using a towel or not having the bed linens changed every day can save large amounts of water.

“In a mega-hotel that has 1,000 rooms, imagine if just 10 percent of the guests said ‘No, I’ll reuse my towel.’ That’s 100 rooms. The hotels are saving not only the water and energy but also the waste,” Ogbeide said.

Due to the interest from customers, many hotels are promoting themselves as environmentally sustainable. One method they use is placing small signs in the room, which not only tell the guests that the hotel is “green,” but also what to do if they don’t want their towels and linens changed. Currently, these things are optional, but Ogbeide envisions hotels eventually having separate areas for those who wish to have the sustainable measures and those who do not.

“A good example right now is we have smoking rooms and non-smoking rooms in some hotels. As time goes on, hotels may have ‘green’ rooms and ‘non-green’ rooms,” he said.

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UNIVERSITY OF
ARKANSAS

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Do you have story ideas or submissions
for the next issue of GO?
Contact Danielle Strickland at strick@uark.edu



Mitsi McKee: Sustainability in Life & Work

Mitsi McKee is the associate director of digital design and development in the office of university relations. She aims to be sustainable in both her professional and personal decision-making, and there's always room to do more!

Q: What sustainable decisions do you make in your life – personally and professionally?

A: I am a minimalist in pretty much every area of my life. I try not to have an overabundance of “stuff” and keep it to just the things I need. Both at home and at work I recycle and reuse whatever I can. I bring my chai to work in a Mason jar in the mornings (and sometimes get a few weird looks!). As far as my profession goes, I live and breathe all things digital. This, in itself, is sustainable in that instead of consuming most of my entertainment and information from magazines, books, or

newspapers that have to be printed I get it all online via laptops and mobile devices. When I design websites I also strive to ensure that users are provided with the optimal user experience no matter what the device. I think this is the most efficient way to present information in the easiest way for the end user to consume – while still looking terrific.

Q: How does your work encourage sustainable decision-making?

A: Just this year, I redesigned sustainability.uark.edu so that's one way that I can make a direct impact on communicating sustainability.

Q: Do you think there are misconceptions about sustainability? If so, what are they?

A: I think there are, yes. I think there's an idea that being “green” equates to extreme sacrifice or not ever washing your hair! I think there's also the idea that products that are “green” are more expensive. While this can be true, it isn't always. A compact fluorescent light bulb may cost a bit more up front but it pays off in the long run because you won't have to replace it as often and your electric bill will be lower.

Q: How would you like to improve your “green” living?

A: I would like to improve my own “green” living by giving up my attachment to my car. There are so many times when I could walk or ride a bike but it's instinctive to just hop in the car. I've made it a goal to buy a bike this year and use it for some of my commuting. Wish me luck!

Q: What more could we do as a campus to decrease our footprint?

A: Around campus, I think we could decrease our footprint by making broader use of some of the technologies we're lucky to have in our newly remodeled building – lights that automatically turn off when no movement is sensed in a room for a period of time; air conditioners that turn off when a window is opened; etc.



*CHANGING,
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The perception that it's expensive to “go green”

can be mistaken. Some changes, such as installing windows, proper window and door seals, and more efficient building materials can be costly and require resources that only large hotel chains like Marriot and Hilton possess, but for small hotels, simple changes will actually save money.

The simplest things, like turning the lights and air conditioning unit off when no one is in the room, will save money. Some hotels even have inspectors who go in the room after it has been cleaned, and turn the cooling system off.

“For those that are doing it, the advantages of going green cannot be over-emphasized,” Ogbeide said.

By charging the same amount per room as non-sustainable hotels, “going green” not only saves the hotels money, it helps increase their profit margin.

“The idea is from the business side: If they decide

to change the building, such as putting in a window which would cost money, they might increase their costs to consumers. What if they didn't do that? What if they take the baby steps?” he said.

Whatever steps they take, it is clear that consumers appreciate hotels that are environmentally responsible.

“Reading between the lines, most of the consumers, you can tell, are environmentally cautious. It's intrinsic motivation,” Ogbeide said. “They want the future generations of children to have a good environment to live in.”



Peer Review: ASU

Arizona State University's School of Sustainability has become the blueprint for sustainability programs across the country. The school's primary focus is to develop practical solutions to some of the most pressing environmental, economic and social challenges of sustainability. Their degree program was established in the spring of 2007 and undergraduate students began to enroll in the fall of 2008.

The School of Sustainability takes a trans-disciplinary approach in its curriculum, meaning it addresses present day issues that cannot be solved by just a few view points, so it brings together academic experts, field practitioners, community members and several other entities to solve some of the current problems facing our world. Many of these struggles include energy, materials, and technology; water quality and scarcity; international development and ecosystems.

In 2012, because of their research on rapid urbanization, Arizona State University is nominated for the Climate Leadership Award in the category of Doctorate Granting University. This award is given to the campus that highlights campus innovation and climate leadership to transition society to a clean, just and sustainable future.

Arizona State has begun to challenge and redefine how people study sustainability. Many schools are slowly integrating programs of this nature to help address this global issue. In the near future, the School of Sustainability at ASU hopes to see all of their research in what they are calling "the global survival experiment" be implemented to help create a better tomorrow.

Committed to Action

In 2007, the University of Arkansas became the first higher education institution in the state, and among the first 100 in the nation, to sign the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment. The commitment is a pledge by the presidents to reduce and ultimately neutralize greenhouse gas emissions on their campuses.

The most recent progress report has been created for the University of Arkansas and is hosted here: <http://rs.acupcc.org/progress/232/>

A few of the highlights:

More than 200 energy efficient retrofit projects have been completed since the signing of the commitment.

Four buildings have received a green building certification since the signing, and four more are planned for completion in the next two years.

In 2011, the Applied Sustainability Center conducted community outreach to educate the public about the importance of energy efficiency. Most notably, the ASC created EcoLogical Communities in an effort to educate individuals to understand and manage their utilities for perhaps the first time.





Project Clean Plate

Project Clean Plate is a Chartwells program that provides awareness to international hunger and helps students focus globally, and act locally, to combat hunger, reduce waste, save energy and initiate real change. It is designed to reduce overall food waste in all-you-can-eat campus dining operations.

Project: Clean Plate begins by randomly monitoring plates at the tray disposal area during select meal periods. Results are gathered and communicated back to the students. It is Chartwells' hope that students are surprised by how much food is wasted and begin a commitment to real change. This is a grass-roots effort to reduce food waste at the consumer level in order to negate global food shortages.



Tiny Trash

You may notice the availability to throw away trash at your desk is diminishing! The smaller trash cans are making their way around campus replacing the larger, standard-size ones. Maybe this will help everyone think twice before tossing something in the trash that could actually be recycled or reused. Just one small way (pun intended) the YOU of A is helping you go green.

Summertime Sustainability

As the warmer weather approaches, there are many ways to have a more sustainable summer. Visit [this link](#) for suggestions like washing your car at a car wash instead of in your driveway (really!) and eliminating use of single-serve items.



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